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The Last Chronicle of Barset

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

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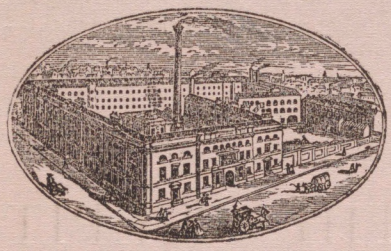

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CHAPTER XLIV.

"I SUPPOSE I MUST LET YOU HAVE IT."

CROSBIE had been preparing the exact words with which he assailed Mr. Butterwell for the last quarter of an hour, before they were uttered. There is always a difficulty in the choice, not only of the words with which money should be borrowed, but of the fashion after which they should be spoken. There is the slow deliberate manner, in using which the borrower attempts to carry the wished-for lender along with him by force of argument, and to prove that the desire to borrow shows no imprudence on his own part, and that a tendency to lend will show none on the part of the intended lender. It may be said that this mode fails oftener than any other. There is the piteous manner,—the plea for commiseration. "My dear fellow, unless you will see me through now, upon my word I shall be very badly off." And this manner may be divided again into two. There is the plea piteous with a lie, and the plea piteous with a truth. "You shall have it again in two months as sure as the sun rises." That is generally the plea piteous with a lie. Or it may be as follows:

"It is only fair to say that I don't quite know when I can pay it back." This is the plea piteous with a truth, and upon the whole I think that this is generally the most successful mode of borrowing. And there is the assured demand,—which betokens a close intimacy. "Old fellow, can you let me have thirty pounds? No? Just put your name, then, on the back of this, and I'll get it done in the City." The worst of that manner is, that the bill so often does not get itself done in the City. Then there is the sudden attack,—that being the manner to which Crosbie had recourse in the present instance. That there are other modes of borrowing by means of which youth becomes indebted to age, and love to respect, and ignorance to experience, is a matter of course. It will be understood that I am here speaking only of borrowing and lending between the Butterwells and Crosbies of the world. "I have come to you in great distress," said Crosbie. "I wonder whether you can help me. I want you to lend me five hundred pounds." Mr. Butterwell, when he heard the words, dropped the paper which he was reading from his hand, and stared at Crosbie over his spectacles.

"Five hundred pounds," he said. "Dear me, Crosbie; that's a large sum of money."

"Yes, it is,—a very large sum. Half that is what I want at once; but I shall want the other half in a month."

"I thought that you were always so much above the world in money matters. Gracious me;—nothing that I have heard for a long time has astonished me more. I don't know why, but I always thought that you had your things so very snug."

Crosbie was aware that he had made one very great step towards success. The idea had been presented to Mr. Butterwell's mind, and had not been instantly rejected as a scandalously iniquitous idea, as an idea to which no reception could be given for a moment. Crosbie had not been treated as was the needy knife-grinder, and had ground to stand upon while he urged his request. "I have been so pressed since my marriage," he said, "that it has been impossible for me to keep things straight."

"But Lady Alexandrina——"

"Yes; of course; I know. I do not like to trouble you with my private affairs;—there is nothing, I think, so bad as washing one's dirty linen in public;—but the truth is, that I am only now free from the rapacity of the De Courcys. You would hardly believe me if I told you what I've had to pay. What do you think of two hundred and forty-five pounds for bringing her body over here, and burying it at De Courcy.

"I'd have left it where it was."

"And so would I. You don't suppose I ordered it to be done. Poor dear thing. If it could do her any good, God knows I would not begrudge it. We had a bad time of it when we were together, but I would have spared nothing for her, alive or dead, that was reasonable. But to make me pay for bringing the body over here, when I never had a shilling with her! By George, it was too bad. And that oaf John De Courcy,—I had to pay his travelling bill too."

"He didn't come to be buried;—did he?"

"It's too disgusting to talk of, Butterwell; it is indeed. And when I asked for her money that was settled upon me,—it was only two thousand pounds,—they made me go to law, and it seems there was no two thousand pounds to settle. If I like, I can have another lawsuit with the sisters, when the mother is dead. Oh, Butterwell, I have made such a fool of myself. I have come to such shipwreck! Oh, Butterwell, if you could but know it all."

"Are you free from the De Courcys now?"

"I owe Gazebee, the man who married the other woman, over a thousand pounds. But I pay that off at two hundred a year, and he has a policy on my life."

"What do you owe that for?"

"Don't ask me. Not that I mind telling you;—furniture, and the lease of a house, and his bill for the marriage settlement,—d—— him."

"God bless me. They seem to have been very hard upon you."

"A man doesn't marry an earl's daughter for nothing, Butterwell. And then to think what I lost! It can't be helped now, you know. As a man makes his bed he must lie on it. I am sometimes so mad with myself when I think over it all,—that I should like to blow my brains out."

"You must not talk in that way, Crosbie. I hate to hear a man talk like that."

"I don't mean that I shall. I'm too much of a coward, I fancy." A man who desires to soften another man's heart, should always abuse himself. In softening a woman's heart, he should abuse her. "But life has been so bitter with me for the last three years! I haven't had an hour of comfort;—not an hour. I don't know why I should trouble you with all this, Butterwell. Oh,—about the money; yes; that's just how I stand. I owed Gazebee something over a thousand pounds, which is arranged as I have told you. Then there were debts, due by my wife,—at least some of them were, I suppose,—and that

horrid, ghastly funeral,—and debts, I don't doubt, due by the cursed old countess. At any rate, to get myself clear I raised something over four hundred pounds, and now I owe five which must be paid, part to-morrow, and the remainder this day month."

"And you've no security?"

"Not a rag, not a shred, not a line, not an acre. There's my salary, and after paying Gazebee what comes due to him, I can manage to let you have the money within twelve months,—that is, if you can lend it me. I can just do that and live; and if you will assist me with the money, I will do so. That's what I've brought myself to by my own folly."

"Five hundred pounds is such a large sum of money."

"Indeed it is."

"And without any security!"

"I know, Butterwell, that I've no right to ask for it. I feel that. Of course I should pay you what interest you please."

"Money's about seven now," said Butterwell.

"I've not the slightest objection to seven per cent.," said Crosbie.

"But that's on security," said Butterwell.

"You can name your own terms," said Crosbie.

Mr. Butterwell got out of his chair, and walked about the room with his hands in his pockets. He was thinking at that moment what Mrs. Butterwell would say to him. "Will an answer do to-morrow morning?" he said. "I would much rather have it to-day," said Crosbie. Then Mr. Butterwell took another turn about the room. "I suppose I must let you have it," he said.

"Butterwell," said Crosbie, "I'm eternally obliged to you. It's hardly too much to say that you've saved me from ruin."

"Of course I was joking about interest," said Butterwell. "Five per cent. is the proper thing. You'd better let me have a little acknowledgment. I'll give you the first half to-morrow."

They were genuine tears which filled Crosbie's eyes, as he seized hold of the senior's hands. "Butterwell," he said, "what am I to say to you?"

"Nothing at all,—nothing at all."

"Your kindness makes me feel that I ought not to have come to you."

"Oh, nonsense. By-the-by, would you mind telling Thompson to bring those papers to me which I gave him yesterday? I promised Optimist I would read them before three, and it's past two now." So saying he sat himself down at his table, and Crosbie felt that he was bound to leave the room.

Mr. Butterwell, when he was left alone, did not read the papers which Thompson brought him; but sat, instead, thinking of his five hundred pounds. "Just put them down," he said to Thompson. So the papers were put down, and there they lay all that day and all the next. Then Thompson took them away again, and it is to be hoped that somebody read them. Five hundred pounds! It was a large sum of money, and Crosbie was a man for whom Mr. Butterwell in truth felt no very strong affection. "Of course he must have it now," he said to himself. "But where should I be if anything happened to him?" And then he remembered that Mrs. Butterwell especially disliked Mr. Crosbie,—disliked him because she knew that he snubbed her husband. "But it's hard to refuse, when one man has known another for more than ten years." Then he comforted himself somewhat with the reflection, that Crosbie would no doubt make himself more pleasant for the future than he had done lately, and with a second reflection, that Crosbie's life was a good life,—and with a third, as to his own great goodness, in assisting a brother officer. Nevertheless, as he sat looking out of the omnibus-window, on his journey home to Putney, he was not altogether comfortable in his mind. Mrs. Butterwell was a very prudent woman.

But Crosbie was very comfortable in his mind on that afternoon. He had hardly dared to hope for success, but he had been successful. He had not even thought of Butterwell as a possible fountain of supply, till his mind had been brought back to the affairs of his office, by the voice of Sir Raffle Buffle at the corner of the street. The idea that his bill would be dishonoured, and that tidings of his insolvency would be conveyed to the Commissioners at his Board, had been dreadful to him. The way in which he had been treated by Musselboro and Dobbs Broughton had made him hate City men, and what he supposed to be City ways. Now there had come to him a relief which suddenly made everything feel light. He could almost think of Mr. Mortimer Gazebee without disgust. Perhaps after all there might be some happiness yet in store for him. Might it not be possible that Lily would yet accept him in spite of the chilling letter,—the freezing letter which he had received from Lily's mother? Of one thing he was quite certain. If ever he had an opportunity of pleading his own cause with her, he certainly would tell her everything respecting his own money difficulties.

In that last resolve I think we may say that he was right. If Lily would ever listen to him again at all, she certainly would not be deterred from marrying him by his own story of his debts.

CHAPTER XLV.

LILY DALE GOES TO LONDON.

One morning towards the end of March the squire rapped at the window of the drawing-room of the Small House, in which Mrs. Dale and her daughter were sitting. He had a letter in his hand, and both Lily and her mother knew that he had come down to speak about the contents of the letter. It was always a sign of good-humour on the squire's part, this rapping at the window. When it became necessary to him in his gloomy moods to see his sister-in-law, he would write a note to her, and she would go across to him at the Great House. At other times, if, as Lily would say, he was just then neither sweet nor bitter, he would go round to the front door and knock, and be admitted after the manner of ordinary people ; but when he was minded to make himself thoroughly pleasant he would come and rap at the drawing-room window, as he was doing now.

"I'll let you in, uncle ; wait a moment," said Lily, as she unbolted the window which opened out upon the lawn. "It's dreadfully cold, so come in as fast as you can."

"It's not cold at all," said the squire. "It's more like spring than any morning we've had yet. I've been sitting without a fire."

"You won't catch us without one for the next two months ; will he, mamma ? You have got a letter, uncle. Is it for us to see ? "

"Well,—yes ; I've brought it down to show you. Mary, what do you think is going to happen ? "

A terrible idea occurred to Mrs. Dale at that moment, but she was much too wise to give it expression. Could it be possible that the squire was going to make a fool of himself and get married ? "I am very bad at guessing," said Mrs. Dale. "You had better tell us."

"Bernard is going to be married," said Lily.

"How did you know ? " said the squire.

"I didn't know. I only guessed."

"Then you've guessed right," said the squire, a little annoyed at having his news thus taken out of his mouth.

"I am so glad," said Mrs. Dale ; "and I know from your manner that you like the match."

"Well,—yes. I don't know the young lady, but I think that

upon the whole I do like it. It's quite time, you know, that he got married."

"He's not thirty yet," said Mrs. Dale.

"He will be, in a month or two."

"And who is it, uncle?"

"Well;—as you're so good at guessing, I suppose you can guess that?"

"It's not that Miss Partridge he used to talk about?"

"No; it's not Miss Partridge,—I'm glad to say. I don't believe that the Partridges have a shilling among them."

"Then I suppose it's an heiress?" said Mrs. Dale.

"No; not an heiress; but she will have some money of her own. And she has connexions in Barsetshire, which makes it pleasant."

"Connexions in Barsetshire! Who can it be?" said Lily.

"Her name is Emily Dunstable," said the squire, "and she is the niece of that Miss Dunstable who married Dr. Thorne and who lives at Chaldicotes."

"She was the woman who had millions upon millions," said Lily, "all got by selling ointment.'

"Never mind how it was got," said the squire, angrily. "Miss Dunstable married most respectably, and has always made a most excellent use of her money."

"And will Bernard's wife have all her fortune?" asked Lily.

"She will have twenty thousand pounds the day she marries, and I suppose that will be all."

"And quite enough, too," said Mrs. Dale.

"It seems that old Dr. Dunstable, as he was called, who, as Lily says, sold the ointment, quarrelled with his son or with his son's widow, and left nothing either to her or her child. The mother is dead, and the aunt, Dr. Thorne's wife, has always provided for the child. That's how it is, and Bernard is going to marry her. They are to be married at Chaldicotes in May."

"I am delighted to hear it," said Mrs. Dale.

"I've known Dr. Thorne for the last forty years;" and the squire now spoke in a low melancholy tone. "I've written to him to say that the young people shall have the old place up there to themselves if they like it."

"What! and turn you out?" said Mrs. Dale.

"That would not matter," said the squire.

"You'd have to come and live with us," said Lily, taking him by the hand.

"It doesn't matter much now where I live," said the squire.

"Bernard will never consent to that," said Mrs. Dale.

"I wonder whether she'll ask me to be a bridesmaid?" said Lily. "They say that Chaldicotes is such a pretty place, and I should see all the Barsetshire people that I've been hearing about from Grace. Poor Grace! I know that the Grantlys and the Thornes are very intimate. Fancy Bernard having twenty thousand pounds from the making of ointment!"

"What does it matter to you where it comes from?" said the squire, half in anger.

"Not in the least; only it sounds so odd. I do hope she's a nice girl."

Then the squire produced a photograph of Emily Dunstable which his nephew had sent to him, and they all pronounced her to be very pretty, to be very much like a lady, and to be very good-humoured. The squire was evidently pleased with the match, and therefore the ladies were pleased also. Bernard Dale was the heir to the estate, and his marriage was of course a matter of moment; and as on such properties as that of Allington money is always wanted, the squire may be forgiven for the great importance which he attached to the young lady's fortune. "Bernard could hardly have married prudently without any money," he said,—"unless he had chosen to wait till I am gone."

"And then he would have been too old to marry at all," said Lily.

But the squire's budget of news had not yet been emptied. He told them soon afterwards that he himself had been summoned up to London. Bernard had written to him, begging him to come and see the young lady; and the family lawyer had written also, saying that his presence in town would be very desirable. "It is very troublesome, of course; but I shall go," said the squire. "It will do you all the good in the world," said Mrs. Dale; "and of course you ought to know her personally before the marriage." And then the squire made a clean breast of it and declared his full purpose. "I was thinking that, perhaps, Lily would not object to go up to London with me."

"Oh, uncle Christopher, I should so like it," said Lily.

"If your mamma does not object."

"Mamma never objects to anything. I should like to see her objecting to that!" And Lily shook her head at her mother.

"Bernard says that Miss Dunstable particularly wants to see you."

"Does she, indeed? And I particularly want to see Miss Dun-

stable. How nice! Mamma, I don't think I've ever been in London since I wore short frocks. Do you remember taking us to the pantomime? Only think how many years ago that is. I'm quite sure it's time that Bernard should get married. Uncle, I hope you're prepared to take me to the play."

"We must see about that!"

"And the opera, and Madame Tussaud, and the Horticultural Gardens, and the new conjuror who makes a woman lie upon nothing. The idea of my going to London! And then I suppose I shall be one of the bridesmaids. I declare a new vista of life is opening out to me! Mamma, you mustn't be dull while I'm away. It won't be very long, I suppose, uncle?"

"About a month, probably," said the squire.

"Oh, mamma; what will you do?"

"Never mind me, Lily."

"You must get Bell and the children to come. But I cannot imagine living away from home a month. I was never away from home a month in my life."

And Lily did go up to town with her uncle, two days only having been allowed to her for her preparations. There was very much for her to think of in such a journey. It was not only that she would see Emily Dunstable who was to be her cousin's wife, and that she would go to the play and visit the new conjuror's entertainment, but that she would be in the same city both with Adolphus Crosbie and with John Eames. Not having personal experience of the wideness of London, and of the wilderness which it is;—of the distance which is set there between persons who are not purposely brought together—it seemed to her fancy as though for this month of her absence from home she would be brought into close contiguity with both her lovers. She had hitherto felt herself to be at any rate safe in her fortress at Allington. When Crosbie had written to her mother, making a renewed offer which had been rejected, Lily had felt that she certainly need not see him unless it pleased her to do so. He could hardly force himself upon her at Allington. And as to John Eames, though he would, of course, be welcome at Allington as often as he pleased to show himself, still there was a security in the place. She was so much at home there that she could always be mistress of the occasion. She knew that she could talk to him at Allington as though from ground higher than that on which he stood himself; but she felt that this would hardly be the case if she should chance to meet him in London. Crosbie probably would not come in her way. Crosbie she thought,—and she blushed for the

man she loved, as the idea came across her mind,—would be afraid of meeting her uncle. But John Eames would certainly find her; and she was led by the experience of latter days to imagine that John would never cross her path without renewing his attempts.

But she said no word of all this, even to her mother. She was contented to confine her outspoken expectations to Emily Dunstable, and the play, and the conjuror. "The chances are ten to one against my liking her, mamma," she said.

"I don't see that, my dear."

"I feel to be too old to think that I shall ever like any more new people. Three years ago I should have been quite sure that I should love a new cousin. It would have been like having a new dress. But I've come to think that an old dress is the most comfortable, and an old cousin certainly the best."

The squire had had taken for them a gloomy lodging in Sackville Street. Lodgings in London are always gloomy. Gloomy colours wear better than bright ones for curtains and carpets, and the keepers of lodgings in London seem to think that a certain dinginess of appearance is respectable. I never saw a London lodging in which any attempt at cheerfulness had been made, and I do not think that any such attempt, if made, would pay. The lodging-seeker would be frightened and dismayed, and would unconsciously be led to fancy that something was wrong. Ideas of burglars and improper persons would present themselves. This is so certainly the case that I doubt whether any well-conditioned lodging-house matron could be induced to show rooms that were prettily draped or pleasantly coloured. The big drawing-room and two large bedrooms which the squire took, were all that was proper, and were as brown, and as gloomy, and as ill-suited for the comforts of ordinary life as though they had been prepared for two prisoners. But Lily was not so ignorant as to expect cheerful lodgings in London, and was satisfied. "And what are we to do now?" said Lily, as soon as they found themselves settled. It was still March, and whatever may have been the nature of the weather at Allington, it was very cold in London. They reached Sackville Street about five in the evening, and an hour was taken up in unpacking their trunks and making themselves as comfortable as their circumstances allowed. "And now what are we to do?" said Lily.

"I told them to have dinner for us at half-past six."

"And what after that? Won't Bernard come to us to-night? I expected him to be standing on the door-steps waiting for us with his bride in his hand."

"I don't suppose Bernard will be here to-night," said the squire. "He did not say that he would, and as for Miss Dunstable, I promised to take you to her aunt's house to-morrow."

"But I wanted to see her to-night. Well;—of course bridesmaids must wait upon brides. And ladies with twenty thousand pounds can't be expected to run about like common people. As for Bernard, —but Bernard never was in a hurry." Then they dined, and when the squire had very nearly fallen asleep over a bottle of port wine which had been sent in for him from some neighbouring public-house, Lily began to feel that it was very dull. And she looked round the room, and she thought that it was very ugly. And she calculated that thirty evenings so spent would seem to be very long. And she reflected that the hours were probably going much more quickly with Emily Dunstable, who, no doubt, at this moment had Bernard Dale by her side. And then she told herself that the hours were not tedious with her at home, while sitting with her mother, with all her daily occupations within her reach. But in so telling herself she took herself to task, inquiring of herself whether such an assurance was altogether true. Were not the hours sometimes tedious even at home? And in this way her mind wandered off to thoughts upon life in general, and she repeated to herself over and over again the two words which she had told John Eames that she would write in her journal. The reader will remember those two words;—Old Maid. And she had written them in her book, making each letter a capital, and round them she had drawn a scroll, ornamented after her own fashion, and she had added the date in quaintly formed figures,—for in such matters Lily had some little skill and a dash of fun to direct it; and she had inscribed below it an Italian motto,—"Who goes softly, goes safely;" and above her work of art she had put a heading—"As arranged by Fate for L. D." Now she thought of all this, and reflected whether Emily Dunstable was in truth very happy. Presently the tears came into her eyes, and she got up and went to the window, as though she were afraid that her uncle might wake and see them. And as she looked out on the blank street, she muttered a word or two—"Dear mother! Dearest mother!" Then the door was opened, and her cousin Bernard announced himself. She had not heard his knock at the door as she had been thinking of the two words in her book.

"What; Bernard!—ah, yes, of course," said the squire, rubbing his eyes as he strove to wake himself. "I wasn't sure you would come, but I'm delighted to see you. I wish you joy with all my heart, —with all my heart."

"Of course, I should come," said Bernard. "Dear Lily, this is so good of you. Emily is so delighted." Then Lily spoke her congratulations warmly, and there was no trace of a tear in her eyes, and she was thoroughly happy as she sat by her cousin's side and listened to his raptures about Emily Dunstable. "And you will be so fond of her aunt," he said.

"But is she not awfully rich?" said Lily.

"Frightfully rich," said Bernard; "but really you would hardly find it out if nobody told you. Of course she lives in a big house, and has a heap of servants; but she can't help that."

"I hate a heap of servants," said Lily.

Then there came another knock at the door, and who should enter the room but John Eames. Lily for a moment was taken aback, but it was only for a moment. She had been thinking so much of him that his presence disturbed her for an instant. "He probably will not know that I am here," she had said to herself; but she had not yet been three hours in London, and he was already with her! At first he hardly spoke to her, addressing himself to the squire. "Lady Julia told me you were to be here, and as I start for the Continent early to-morrow morning, I thought you would let me come and see you before I went."

"I'm always glad to see you, John," said the squire,—"very glad. And so you're going abroad, are you?"

Then Johnny congratulated his old acquaintance, Bernard Dale, as to his coming marriage, and explained to them how Lady Julia in one of her letters had told him all about it, and had even given him the number in Sackville Street. "I suppose she learned it from you, Lily," said the squire. "Yes, uncle, she did." And then there came questions as to John's projected journey to the Continent, and he explained that he was going on law-business, on behalf of Mr. Crawley, to catch the dean and Mrs. Arabin, if it might be possible. "You see, sir, Mr. Toogood, who is Mr. Crawley's cousin, and also his lawyer, is my cousin, too; and that's why I'm going." And still there had been hardly a word spoken between him and Lily.

"But you're not a lawyer, John; are you?" said the squire.

"No. I'm not a lawyer myself."

"Nor a lawyer's clerk."

"Certainly not a lawyer's clerk," said Johnny, laughing.

"Then why should you go?" asked Bernard Dale.

Then Johnny had to explain; and in doing so he became very eloquent as to the hardships of Mr. Crawley's case. "You see, sir,

nobody can possibly believe that such a man as that stole twenty pounds."

"I do not for one," said Lily.

"God forbid that I should say he did," said the squire.

"I'm quite sure he didn't," said Johnny, warming to his subject. "It couldn't be that such a man as that should become a thief all at once. It's not human nature, sir; is it?"

"It is very hard to know what is human nature," said the squire.

"It's the general opinion down in Barsetshire that he did steal it," said Bernard. "Dr. Thorne was one of the magistrates who committed him, and I know he thinks so."

"I don't blame the magistrates in the least," said Johnny.

"That's kind of you," said the squire.

"Of course you'll laugh at me, sir; but you'll see that we shall come out right. There's some mystery in it of which we haven't got at the bottom as yet; and if there is anybody that can help us it's the dean."

"If the dean knows anything, why has he not written and told what he knows?" said the squire.

"That's what I can't say. The dean has not had an opportunity of writing since he heard,—even if he has yet heard,—that Mr. Crawley is to be tried. And then he and Mrs. Arabin are not together. It's a long story, and I will not trouble you with it all; but at any rate I'm going off to-morrow. Lily, can I do anything for you in Florence?"

"In Florence?" said Lily; "and are you really going to Florence? How I envy you."

"And who pays your expenses?" said the squire.

"Well;—as to my expenses, they are to be paid by a person who won't raise any unpleasant questions about the amount."

"I don't know what you mean," said the squire.

"He means himself," said Lily.

"Is he going to do it out of his own pocket?"

"He is," said Lily, looking at her lover.

"I'm going to have a trip for my own fun," said Johnny, "and I shall pick up evidence on the road, as I'm going;—that's all."

Then Lily began to take an active part in the conversation, and a great deal was said about Mr. Crawley, and about Grace, and Lily declared that she would be very anxious to hear any news which John Eames might be able to send. "You know, John, how fond we are of your cousin Grace, at Allington? Are we not, uncle?"

"Yes, indeed," said the squire. "I thought her a very nice girl."

"If you should be able to learn anything that may be of use, John, how happy you will be."

"Yes, I shall," said Johnny.

"And I think it so good of you to go, John. But it is just like you. You were always generous." Soon after that he got up and went. It was very clear to him that he would have no moment in which to say a word alone to Lily; and if he could find such a moment, what good would such a word do him? It was as yet but a few weeks since she had positively refused him. And he too remembered very well those two words which she had told him that she would write in her book. As he had been coming to the house he had told himself that his coming would be,—could be of no use. And yet he was disappointed with the result of his visit, although she had spoken to him so sweetly.

"I suppose you'll be gone when I come back?" he said.

"We shall be here a month," said the squire.

"I shall be back long before that, I hope," said Johnny. "Good-by, sir. Good-by, Dale. Good-by, Lily." And he put out his hand to her.

"Good-by, John." And then she added, almost in a whisper, "I think you are very, very right to go." How could he fail after that to hope as he walked home that she might still relent. And she also thought much of him, but her thoughts of him made her cling more firmly than ever to the two words. She could not bring herself to marry him; but, at least, she would not break his heart by becoming the wife of any one else. Soon after this Bernard Dale went also. I am not sure that he had been well pleased at seeing John Eames become suddenly the hero of the hour. When a young man is going to perform so important an act as that of marriage, he is apt to think that he ought to be the hero of the hour himself—at any rate among his own family.

Early on the next morning Lily was taken by her uncle to call upon Mrs. Thorne, and to see Emily Dunstable. Bernard was to meet them there, but it had been arranged that they should reach the house first. "There is nothing so absurd as these introductions," Bernard had said. "You go and look at her, and when you've had time to look at her, then I'll come!" So the squire and Lily went off to look at Emily Dunstable.

"You don't mean to say that she lives in that house?" said Lily, when the cab was stopped before an enormous mansion in one of the most fashionable of the London squares.

"I believe she does," said the squire.

"I never shall be able to speak to anybody living in such a house as that," said Lily. "A duke couldn't have anything grander."

"Mrs. Thorne is richer than half the dukes," said the squire. Then the door was opened by a porter, and Lily found herself within the hall. Everything was very great, and very magnificent, and, as she thought, very uncomfortable. Presently she heard a loud jovial voice on the stairs. "Mr. Dale, I'm delighted to see you. And this is your niece Lily. Come up, my dear. There is a young woman upstairs, dying to embrace you. Never mind the umbrella. Put it down anywhere. I want to have a look at you, because Bernard swears that you're so pretty." This was Mrs. Thorne, once Miss Dunstable, the richest woman in England, and the aunt of Bernard's bride. The reader may perhaps remember the advice which she once gave to Major Grantly, and her enthusiasm on that occasion. "There she is, Mr. Dale; what do you think of her?" said Mrs. Thorne, as she opened the door of a small sitting-room wedged in between two large saloons, in which Emily Dunstable was sitting.

"Aunt Martha, how can you be so ridiculous?" said the young lady.

"I suppose it is ridiculous to ask the question to which one really wants to have an answer," said Mrs. Thorne. "But Mr. Dale has, in truth, come to inspect you, and to form an opinion; and, in honest truth, I shall be very anxious to know what he thinks,—though, of course, he won't tell me."

The old man took the girl in his arms, and kissed her on both cheeks. "I have no doubt you'll find out what I think," he said, "though I should never tell you."

"I generally do find out what people think," she said. "And so you're Lily Dale?"

"Yes, I'm Lily Dale."

'I have so often heard of you, particularly of late; for you must know that a certain Major Grantly is a friend of mine. We must take care that that affair comes off all right, must we not?"

"I hope it will." Then Lily turned to Emily Dunstable, and, taking her hand, went up and sat beside her, while Mrs. Thorne and the squire talked of the coming marriage. "How long have you been engaged?" said Lily.

"Really engaged, about three weeks. I think it is not more than three weeks ago."

"How very discreet Bernard has been. He never told us a word about it while it was going on."

"Men never do tell, I suppose," said Emily Dunstable.

"Of course you love him very dearly?" said Lily, not knowing what else to say.

"Of course I do."

"So do we. You know he's almost a brother to us; that is, to me and my sister. We never had a brother of our own." And so the morning was passed till Lily was told by her uncle to come away, and was told also by Mrs. Thorne that she was to dine with them in the square on that day. "You must not be surprised that my husband is not here," she said. "He is a very odd sort of man, and he never comes to London if he can help it."

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE BAYSWATER ROMANCE.

Eames had by no means done his work for that evening when he left Mr. Dale and Lily at their lodgings. He had other business on hand to which he had promised to give attention, and another person to see who would welcome his coming quite as warmly, though by no means as pleasantly, as Lily Dale. It was then just nine o'clock, and as he had told Miss Demolines,—Madalina we may as well call her now,—that he would be in Porchester Terrace by nine at the latest, it was incumbent on him to make haste. He got into a cab, and bid the cabman drive hard, and lighting a cigar, began to inquire of himself whether it was well for him to hurry away from the presence of Lily Dale to that of Madalina Demolines. He felt that he was half-ashamed of what he was doing. Though he declared to himself over and over again that he never had said a word, and never intended to say a word, to Madalina, which all the world might not hear, yet he knew that he was doing amiss. He was doing amiss, and half repented it, and yet he was half proud of it. He was most anxious to be able to give himself credit for his constancy to Lily Dale; to be able to feel that he was steadfast in his passion; and yet he liked the idea of amusing himself with his Bayswater romance, as he would call it, and was not without something of conceit as he thought of the progress he had made in it. "Love is one thing and amusement is another," he said to himself as he puffed the cigar-smoke out of his mouth; and in his heart he was proud of his own capacity for enjoyment. He thought it a fine thing,

although at the same moment he knew it to be an evil thing—this hurrying away from the young lady whom he really loved to another as to whom he thought it very likely that he should be called upon to pretend to love her. And he sang a little song as he went, "If she be not fair for me, what care I how fair she be." That was intended to apply to Lily, and was used as an excuse for his fickleness in going to Miss Demolines. And he was, perhaps, too, a little conceited as to his mission to the Continent. Lily had told him that she was very glad that he was going; that she thought him very right to go. The words had been pleasant to his ears, and Lily had never looked prettier in his eyes than when she had spoken them. Johnny, therefore, was rather proud of himself as he sat in the cab smoking his cigar. He had, moreover, beaten his old enemy Sir Raffle Buffle in another contest, and he felt that the world was smiling on him;—that the world was smiling on him in spite of his cruel fate in the matter of his real lovesuit.

There was a mystery about the Bayswater romance which was not without its allurement, and a portion of the mystery was connected with Madalina's mother. Lady Demolines was very rarely seen, and John Eames could not quite understand what was the manner of life of that unfortunate lady. Her daughter usually spoke of her with affectionate regret as being unable to appear on that particular occasion on account of some passing malady. She was suffering from a nervous headache, or was afflicted with bronchitis, or had been touched with rheumatism, so that she was seldom on the scene when Johnny was passing his time at Porchester Terrace. And yet he heard of her dining out, and going to plays and operas; and when he did chance to see her, he found that she was a sprightly old woman enough. I will not venture to say that he much regretted the absence of Lady Demolines, or that he was keenly alive to the impropriety of being left alone with the gentle Madalina; but the customary absence of the elder lady was an incident in the romance which did not fail to strike him.

Madalina was alone when he was shown up into the drawing-room on the evening of which we are speaking.

"Mr. Eames," she said, "will you kindly look at that watch which is lying on the table." She looked full at him with her great eyes wide open, and the tone of her voice was intended to show him that she was aggrieved.

"Yes, I see it," said John, looking down on Miss Demolines' little gold Geneva watch, with which he had already made sufficient acquaintance to know that it was worth nothing. "Shall I give it you?"

"No, Mr. Eames; let it remain there, that it may remind me, if it

does not remind you, by how long a time you have broken your word."

"Upon my word I couldn't help it;—upon my honour I couldn't."

"Upon your honour, Mr. Eames!"

"I was obliged to go and see a friend who has just come to town from my part of the country."

"That is the friend, I suppose, of whom I have heard from Maria." It is to be feared that Conway Dalrymple had not been so guarded as he should have been in some of his conversations with Mrs. Dobbs Broughton, and that a word or two had escaped from him as to the love of John Eames for Lily Dale.

"I don't know what you may have heard," said Johnny, "but I was obliged to see these people before I left town. There is going to be a marriage and all that sort of thing."

"Who is going to be married?"

"One Captain Dale is going to be married to one Miss Dunstable."

"Oh! And as to one Miss Lily Dale,—is she to be married to anybody?"

"Not that I have heard of," said Johnny.

"She is not going to become the wife of one Mr. John Eames?"

He did not wish to talk to Miss Demolines about Lily Dale. He did not choose to disown the imputation, or to acknowledge its truth.

"Silence gives consent," she said. "If it be so, I congratulate you. I have no doubt she is a most charming young woman. It is about seven years, I believe, since that little affair with Mr. Crosbie, and therefore that, I suppose, may be considered as forgotten."

"It is only three years," said Johnny, angrily. "Besides, I don't know what that has to do with it."

"You need not be ashamed," said Madalina. "I have heard how well you behaved on that occasion. You were quite the preux chevalier; and if any gentleman ever deserved well of a lady you deserved well of her. I wonder how Mr. Crosbie felt when he met you the other day at Maria's. I had not heard anything about it then, or I should have been much more interested in watching your meeting."

"I really can't say how he felt."

"I daresay not; but I saw him shake hands with you. And so Lily Dale has come to town?"

"Yes,—Miss Dale is here with her uncle."

"And you are going away to-morrow?"

"Yes,—and I am going away to-morrow."

After that there was a pause in the conversation. Eames was sick

of it, and was very anxious to change the conversation. Miss Demolines was sitting in the shadow, away from the light, with her face half hidden by her hands. At last she jumped up, and came round and stood opposite to him. "I charge you to tell me truly, John Eames," she said, "whether Miss Lilian Dale is engaged to you as your future wife?" He looked up into her face, but made no immediate answer. Then she repeated her demand. "I ask you whether you are engaged to marry Miss Lilian Dale, and I expect a reply."

"What makes you ask me such a question as that?"

"What makes me ask you? Do you deny my right to feel so much interest in you as to desire to know whether you are about to be married? Of course you can decline to tell me if you choose."

"And if I were to decline?"

"I should know then that it was true, and I should think that you were a coward."

"I don't see any cowardice in the matter. One does not talk about that kind of thing to everybody."

"Upon my word, Mr. Eames, you are complimentary;—indeed you are. To everybody! I am everybody,—am I? That is your idea of —friendship! You may be sure that after that I shall ask no further questions."

"I didn't mean it in the way you've taken it, Madalina."

"In what way did you mean it, sir? Everybody! Mr. Eames, you must excuse me if I say that I am not well enough this evening to bear the company of—everybody. I think you had better leave me. I think that you had better go."

"Are you angry with me?"

"Yes, I am,—very angry. Because I have condescended to feel an interest in your welfare, and have asked you a question which I thought that our intimacy justified, you tell me that that is a kind of thing that you will not talk about to—everybody. I beg you to understand that I will not be your everybody. Mr. Eames, there is the door."

Things had now become very serious. Hitherto Johnny had been seated comfortably in the corner of a sofa, and had not found himself bound to move, though Miss Demolines was standing before him. But now it was absolutely necessary that he should do something. He must either go, or else he must make entreaty to be allowed to remain. Would it not be expedient that he should take the lady at her word and escape? She was still pointing to the door, and the way was open to him. If he were to walk out now of course he would never return, and there would be the end of the Bayswater romance. If he remained

it might be that the romance would become troublesome. He got up from his seat, and had almost resolved that he would go. Had she not somewhat relaxed the majesty of her anger as he rose, had the fire of her eye not been somewhat quenched and the lines of her mouth softened, I think that he would have gone. The romance would have been over, and he would have felt that it had come to an inglorious end; but it would have been well for him that he should have gone. Though the fire was somewhat quenched and the lines were somewhat softened, she was still pointing to the door. "Do you mean it?" he said.

"I do mean it,—certainly."

"And this is to be the end of everything?"

"I do not know what you mean by everything. It is a very little everything to you, I should say. I do not quite understand your everything and your everybody."

"I will go, if you wish me to go, of course."

"I do wish it."

"But before I go, you must permit me to excuse myself. I did not intend to offend you. I merely meant——"

"You merely meant! Give me an honest answer to a downright question. Are you engaged to Miss Lilian Dale?"

"No;—I am not."

"Upon your honour?"

"Do you think that I would tell you a falsehood about it? What I meant was that it is a kind of thing one doesn't like talking about, merely because stories are bandied about. People are so fond of saying that this man is engaged to that woman, and of making up tales; and it seems to be so foolish to contradict such things."

"But you know that you used to be very fond of her?"

He had taken up his hat when he had risen from the sofa, and was still standing with it ready in his hand. He was even now half-minded to escape; and the name of Lily Dale in Miss Demolines' mouth was so distasteful to him that he would have done so,—he would have gone in sheer disgust, had she not stood in his way, so that he could not escape without moving her, or going round behind the sofa. She did not stir to make way for him, and it may be that she understood that he was her prisoner, in spite of her late command to him to go. It may be, also, that she understood his vexation and the cause of it, and that she saw the expediency of leaving Lily Dale alone for the present. At any rate, she pressed him no more upon the matter. "Are we to be friends again?" she said.

"I hope so," replied Johnny.

"There is my hand, then." So Johnny took her hand and pressed it, and held it a little while,—just long enough to seem to give a meaning to the action. "You will get to understand me some day," she said, "and will learn that I do not like to be reckoned among the everybodies by those for whom I really—really—really have a regard. When I am angry, I am angry."

"You were very angry just now, when you showed me the way to the door."

"And I meant it too,—for the minute. Only think,—supposing you had gone! We should never have seen each other again;—never, never! What a change one word may make!"

"One word often does make a change."

"Does it not? Just a little 'yes,' or 'no.' A 'no' is said when a 'yes' is meant, and then there comes no second chance, and what a change that may be from bright hopes to desolation! Or, worse again, a 'yes' is said when a 'no' should be said,—when the speaker knows that it should be 'no.' What a difference that 'no' makes! When one thinks of it, one wonders that a woman should ever say anything but 'no.'"

"They never did say anything else to me," said Johnny.

"I don't believe it. I daresay the truth is, you never asked anybody."

"Did anybody ever ask you?"

"What would you give to know? But I will tell you frankly;—yes. And once,—once I thought that my answer would not have been a 'no.'"

"But you changed your mind?'

"When the moment came I could not bring myself to say the word that should rob me of my liberty for ever. I had said 'no' to him often enough before,—poor fellow; and on this occasion he told me that he asked for the last time. 'I shall not give myself another chance,' he said, 'for I shall be on board ship within a week.' I merely bade him good-by. It was the only answer I gave him. He understood me, and since that day his foot has never pressed his native soil."

"And was it all because you are so fond of your liberty?" said Johnny.

"Perhaps,—I did not—love him," said Miss Demolines, thoughtfully. She was now again seated in her chair, and John Eames had gone back to his corner of the sofa. "If I had really loved him I suppose it would have been otherwise. He was a gallant fellow, and had two thousand a year of his own, in India stock and other securities."

"Dear me! And he has not married yet?"

"He wrote me word to say that he would never marry till I was married,—but that on the day that he should hear of my wedding, he would go to the first single woman near him and propose. It was a droll thing to say; was it not?"

"The single woman ought to feel herself flattered."

"He would find plenty to accept him. Besides being so well off he was a very handsome fellow, and is connected with people of title. He had everything to recommend him."

"And yet you refused him so often?"

"Yes. You think I was foolish;—do you not?"

"I don't think you were at all foolish if you didn't care for him."

"It was my destiny, I suppose; I daresay I was wrong. Other girls marry without violent love, and do very well afterwards. Look at Maria Clutterbuck."

The name of Maria Clutterbuck had become odious to John Eames. As long as Miss Demolines would continue to talk about herself he could listen with some amount of gratification. Conversation on that subject was the natural progress of the Bayswater romance. And if Madalina would only call her friend by her present name, he had no strong objection to an occasional mention of the lady; but the combined names of Maria Clutterbuck had come to be absolutely distasteful to him. He did not believe in the Maria Clutterbuck friendship,—either in its past or present existence, as described by Madalina. Indeed, he did not put strong faith in anything that Madalina said to him. In the handsome gentleman with two thousand a year, he did not believe at all. But the handsome gentleman had only been mentioned once in the course of his acquaintance with Miss Demolines, whereas Maria Clutterbuck had come up so often! "Upon my word I must wish you good-by," he said. "It is going on for eleven o'clock, and I have to start to-morrow at seven."

"What difference does that make?"

"A fellow wants to get a little sleep, you know."

"Go then;—go and get your sleep. What a sleepy-headed generation it is." Johnny longed to ask her whether the last generation was less sleepy-headed, and whether the gentleman with two thousand a year had sat up talking all night before he pressed his foot for the last time on his native soil; but he did not dare. As he said to himself afterwards, "It would not do to bring the Bayswater romance too suddenly to its termination!" "But before you go," she continued, "I must say the word to you about that picture. Did you speak to Mr. Dalrymple?"

"I did not. I have been so busy with different things that I have not seen him."

"And now you are going?"

"Well,—to tell the truth, I think I shall see him to-night, in spite of my being so sleepy-headed. I wrote him a line that I would look in and smoke a cigar with him if he chanced to be at home!

"And that is why you want to go. A gentleman cannot live without his cigar now."

"It is especially at your bidding that I am going to see him."

"Go, then,—and make your friend understand that if he continues this picture of his, he will bring himself to great trouble, and will probably ruin the woman for whom he professes, I presume, to feel something like friendship. You may tell him that Mrs. Van Siever has already heard of it."

"Who told her?" demanded Johnny.

"Never mind. You need not look at me like that. It was not I. Do you suppose that secrets can be kept when so many people know them? Every servant in Maria's house knows all about it."

"As for that, I don't suppose Mrs. Broughton makes any great secret of it."

"Do you think she has told Mr. Broughton? I am sure she has not. I may say I know she has not. Maria Clutterbuck is infatuated. There is no other excuse to be made for her."

"Good-by," said Johnny, hurriedly.

"And you really are going?"

"Well,—yes. I suppose so."

"Go then. I have nothing more to say to you."

"I shall come and call directly I return," said Johnny.

"You may do as you please about that, sir."

"Do you mean that you won't be glad to see me again?"

"I am not going to flatter you, Mr. Eames. Mamma will be well by that time, I hope, and I do not mind telling you that you are a favourite with her." Johnny thought that this was particularly kind, as he had seen so very little of the old lady. "If you choose to call upon her," said Madalina, "of course she will be glad to see you."

"But I was speaking of yourself, you know?" and Johnny permitted himself for a moment to look tenderly at her.

"Then from myself pray understand that I will say nothing to flatter your self-love."

"I thought you would be kinder just when I was going away."

"I think I have been quite kind enough. As you observed yourself

just now, it is nearly eleven o'clock, and I must ask you to go away. Bon voyage, and a happy return to you."

"And you will be glad to see me when I am back? Tell me that you will be glad to see me."

"I will tell you nothing of the kind. Mr. Eames, if you do, I will be very angry with you." And then he went.

On his way back to his own lodgings he did call on Conway Dalrymple, and in spite of his need for early rising, sat smoking with the artist for an hour. "If you don't take care, young man," said his friend, "you will find yourself in a scrape with your Madalina."

"What sort of a scrape?"

"As you walk away from Porchester Terrace some fine day, you will have to congratulate yourself on having made a successful overture towards matrimony."

"You don't think I am such a fool as that comes to?"

"Other men as wise as you have done the same sort of thing. Miss Demolines is very clever, and I daresay you find it amusing."

"It isn't so much that she's clever, and I can hardly say that it is amusing. One gets awfully tired of it, you know. But a fellow must have something to do, and that is as good as anything else."

"I suppose you have not heard that one young man levanted last year to save himself from a breach of promise case?"

"I wonder whether he had any money in Indian securities?"

"What makes you ask that?"

"Nothing particular."

"Whatever little he had he chose to save, and I think I heard that he went to Canada. His name was Shorter; and they say that, on the eve of his going, Madalina sent him word that she had no objection to the colonies, and that, under the pressing emergency of his expatriation, she was willing to become Mrs. Shorter with more expedition than usually attends fashionable weddings. Shorter, however, escaped, and has never been seen back again."

Eames declared that he did not believe a word of it. Nevertheless, as he walked home he came to the conclusion that Mr. Shorter must have been the handsome gentleman with Indian securities, to whom "no" had been said once too often.

While sitting with Conway Dalrymple, he had forgotten to say a word about Jael and Sisera.

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